

Corridor Working Group Meeting – Meeting Summary

November 15, 2005

1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

WSDOT Kent Maintenance Center
26620 68th Avenue South, Kent 98032**Attendees:****WSDOT**Craig Stone
Carol Hunter
Thomas Noyes
Mike Sallis
Stephanie Weber
Ron Landon**City of Kent**Tim LaPorte
Steve Mullen
Cathy Mooney
Chad Bieren**Port of Tacoma**

Dick Dorsett

PSRC

Charlie Howard

Pierce County

Cindy Larkin

City of Renton

Nick Afzali

King CountyAnn Martin
Lisa Schafer**City of Auburn**Dennis Dowdy
Roger Thordarson**Perteet**Michael Stringam
Michael Booth**Carter Burgess**Greg Henk
Jared Moore**EnviroIssues**

Kristine dos Remedios

Welcome and Introductions*Carol Hunter, WSDOT*

Carol Hunter, WSDOT, welcomed the group and thanked them for coming. All attendees introduced themselves and the agency they represent. Carol reviewed the agenda and started the meeting. The objective of the meeting was to discuss the next steps after the election and the defeat of I-912, and provide an update on the HOT Lanes Pilot Project, Corridor Plan, and the HOV Environmental Assessment.

Approve July 19th and October 18th Meeting Summaries*Carol Hunter, WSDOT*

Copies of the July 19th and October 18th meeting summaries were provided to the partners prior to the meeting via email and in hard copy at the meeting. Carol asked for any comments or revisions to the summaries. There were none. The summaries were considered approved and will be posted on the project websites.

I-912 Impacts

Carol Hunter, WSDOT

Carol referred to the map of projects along the SR 167 corridor that are funded by both Nickel and TPA dollars, which is about \$130 million worth of work. Due to the number and scope of the projects being planned for SR 167, WSDOT will hire a general engineering consultant to manage the coordination of these projects for SR 167. The HOT Lanes Pilot Project is now fully funded through construction with the TPA funding.

Discussion Topics:

- Tim LaPorte, City of Kent, asked if the \$130 million in projects along SR 167 included the interchange improvements at I-405 and SR 167. Nick Afzali said that figure does not include the interchange improvements, as those improvements are worth \$136 in Nickel funding and \$160M in TPA funding by themselves.
- Tim asked if it was fair to say that the HOV lane extension will go to Puyallup. Carol said that WSDOT did not know the answer to this yet. It is doubtful that WSDOT will be able to get the HOV lane extended to Puyallup in both directions. Tim asked if it was safe to say that the extension would go at least to Sumner. Carol said that WSDOT did not know the answer to this yet either. Typically HOV lanes are built symmetrically. WSDOT is currently discussing the idea of using the \$80M to extend the HOV in one direction and for a longer length instead.
- Ann Martin, King County, asked about the timing of the HOV construction. Carol said it would take 12-18 months to complete the Environmental Assessment. Construction dollars for the HOV extension are spread out over a couple of bienniums, and will be completed by 2011. If the HOT lanes are successful, they will be extended along the entire length of the HOV system on SR 167. The Environmental Assessment assumes that the HOT lanes are in place along the length of the HOV system so the environmental work is complete for this as well, if the decision to extend the HOT lane is made.
- Charlie Howard, PSRC, asked what impact I-912 had on the timing of these projects. Carol said that there was no or little impact to the project schedules. The Corridor Plan and HOT lanes projects are currently spending already allocated federal dollars, so no work was stalled due to the vote. TPA dollars will be used for construction work, or Phase 3, of the HOT Lanes project. The HOV lane extension was stalled a little bit, as WSDOT was holding off on some projects until the final decision on I-912 was made, but the current effort to prepare an EA was funded by Nickel dollars and has been moving forward on schedule.

HOT Lanes Pilot Project Status Report

Carol Hunter, WSDOT and Greg Henk, Carter Burgess

Greg Henk said that the HOT Lanes project team is currently working on a number of items. Discussions about the project delivery method are being held between the team and WSDOT. The team is currently looking at a design-build scenario since there is little civil work involved in the project delivery, compared to the systems work that needs to be completed.

The concept of operations plan, or how the HOT lanes will operate and who will be responsible for its operation, is also being finalized. This plan includes how the public will purchase toll readers, receive bills for their tolls, how HOT lanes will be enforced, how drivers will enter and exit the HOT lanes, and how to differentiate between an SOV and an HOV vehicles in the lanes.

The first phase of the HOT lanes project will be complete by February. At that point, the team will provide a contractor the final HOT lanes systems plan, in order to develop specifications on the necessary details for building and implementing the HOT lanes system.

Carol reminded the partners that she'd be happy to brief stakeholder groups or make a presentation to local elected officials, commissions, or city councils on the HOT Lanes project if requested.

Discussion:

- Tim LaPorte asked if the operations system, in terms of billing and toll readers, would be the same as the Narrows Bridge system, and if drivers will receive only one WSDOT bill for tolls. Carol said that yes, the toll readers will be similar if not identical to the readers being distributed for the Narrows Bridge, and WSDOT expects that it will be able to coordinate the SR 167 HOT Lanes tolls with other state tolling systems, so drivers receive only one bill. The ferry system may need to remain separate, as their toll rates are extremely complex.
- Ann Martin asked how much thought is being put into the expansion or system wide potential for tolling state highways and bridges. Greg Henk said that his team's recommendations will outline the best system design for the project as well as for the state if they are going to consider expanding the tolling concept.
- Tim said that the City of Kent would take Carol up on her offer for a presentation on HOT Lanes, but not until February, when the new council members and elected officials are settled in after the November election.

Stage 4/5 HOV Environmental Assessment

Carol Hunter and Mike Sallis, WSDOT

WSDOT is using a new tool, developed by headquarters, called Watershed Characterization. Project teams can take full advantage of this tool to identify sites

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for project mitigation, and to help improve or create wetlands to restore the historic water movement within the SR 167 valley. The characterization shows over 1200 potential mitigation sites in the valley. The project team will be contacting the partners within the next couple of weeks to review these sites and discuss the best ways to mitigate for project impacts, in order to get the projects implemented.

Discussion:

- Ann Martin asked if the project teams had been in contact with the County basin planners. Carol said yes.
- Tim LaPorte asked if the watershed information and partner discussions would be fed into the EA as well, for potential mitigation sites. Carol said yes, the information would be used for EA efforts, as well as the Corridor Plan and HOT Lanes Pilot Project.

Project Selection Criteria

Michael Stringam, Perteet

Michael Stringam, Perteet, provided the partners with an update on the project selection criteria that will be used to screen the short- and long-term packages for inclusion in the SR 167 Corridor Plan. The selection criteria have been updated based on the partners' feedback, and the team is currently in the process of detailing how to measure each criterion. The major challenge is determining how to screen long-term projects as well as short-term, or bottleneck projects, which are typically more detailed, site-specific projects, with the same criteria. In the next couple of weeks the team will outline the recommendations on the evaluation criteria.

The four different corridor options are also being discussed. The conversation is focused on two things. First, if a managed lane system is pursued, would access points change for the corridor? Second, will the recommended two lanes in each direction be general-purpose lanes or managed lanes?

Discussion:

- Carol Hunter said that transportation planners in Atlanta recently looked into the option of a Truck Only Toll (TOT) Lane. SR 167 may also be a good candidate for a TOT lane, based on the number of trucks that use the corridor.
- Ann Martin, Tim LaPorte and Dick Dorsett said they were interested in seeing TOT lanes modeled for the corridor.
- Ann Martin asked if global warming issues are being considered as a criterion for screening projects, or if this falls under general air quality issues. The project team said that this generally falls under evaluating air quality impacts.

Truckers Survey

Michael Stringam, Perteet

Michael Stringam gave an update on the truckers' survey. The survey will be sent out to about 100 truckers and distribution centers through Washington Truckers Association contact list. Another 25-50 surveys will be sent out to contacts provided by the local jurisdictions. The survey has about 15-20 questions about the type of trucks are using the corridor, where trucks are traveling on SR167, the bottleneck issues, from a trucker's perspective, and the future issues truckers foresee for the corridor. The feedback from the survey will be incorporated into the travel demand forecasting model for trucking.

Discussion:

- Tim LaPorte asked that the team coordinate with the City of Kent regarding truckers in the Kent Valley.
- Ann Martin asked if the questions are more attitudinal, or ask for measurements and numbers, such as how many trucks each distribution center releases onto SR 167 each day. Michael reviewed the types of questions on the survey, so the partners could get a feel for the survey and the information that will be gathered from it. The survey asks questions about how long a trucker has operated on SR 167, the type of trucks (small, medium, large) that use SR 167, main origins and destinations, fixed time movements, alternate routes, major corridor issues, and willingness to pay for increased safety and mobility.
- Ann asked if the survey is focusing on large trucking industries only. Michael said that the survey is being sent to large operations as opposed to industries such as small bakeries along SR 167.
- Tim asked if the team was still formulating the questionnaire. Michael said that the questionnaire had been finalized, unless there were major issues or additions from the partners. Tim asked if there was a question about willingness to pay for a TOT lane. Michael said that there were questions on the survey that address that issue.
- Dennis Dowdy, City of Auburn, asked if the survey would give the team enough information to estimate the projected industry growth. Michael said no, but the survey would give the team a feel for what the industry is thinking and planning for in terms of growth. This information will help the team get an idea of how this growth will affect land use.
- Dick Dorsett said that there is a lot of regional discussion about the growth of freight and its impacts on land use. If cities in the valley are not willing to change land use to accommodate freight growth, then that growth will have to go somewhere else, and where?
- Ann Martin asked if the team was attempting to get information on what it costs to operate freight in a congested system. Michael said no, the team had enough of that kind of data.
- Tim LaPorte asked the partners about how they feel about the idea of two general-purpose or two managed lanes in each direction.

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- Ann Martin said that King County has expressed concern about two general-purpose lanes in the past. Ann said there should be a way to address freight mobility and congestion without increasing capacity.
- Charlie Howard, PSRC, said that a system-wide approach should be examined, in order to reach efficiency of the regional system and get the maximum use of the pavement that is out there or may be built in the future.
- Nick Afzali, City of Renton, said that they would be interested in exploring the TOT lane concept. The team should also consider how congestion on major highways impacts local roads. If more through traffic is shifted to local roads, the local cost of pavement preservation becomes an issue. If through traffic can be contained on major highways, cities may save in costs for pavement preservation.
- Thomas Noyes, WSDOT, provided a brief update on the current tolling study being conducted. WSDOT is looking at both a managed lane system including TOT lanes. This tolling study was legislatively mandated and will be presented next July to the transportation commission. The team is scheduled to give an update to the commission in early December and would send the update report to the SR 167 partners.
- Carol Hunter said that WSDOT is also having a policy discussion about whether tolls should be used to raise revenues, to relieve or manage traffic, or to do both.

Modeling Status

Michael Stringam, Perteet

Michael gave an update on the Corridor Plan modeling efforts. The partners were provided a handout that included graphs of traffic during each day of the week, during different times of the year, and of truck traffic. There were some questions about whether there were seasonal variations, and variations during the week in traffic on SR 167. Some analysis was done to answer these questions, and it was found that there was essentially no seasonal variations in traffic and traffic does not vary much during the week, except that the peak traffic period starts later on the weekends.

It was also found that there are an average of 1000 trucks per hour traveling on SR 167, but when this truck traffic is concentrated during the mid-day hours, it can significantly impact traffic flow.

The project team is also validating the base year modeling for the travel demand forecasting model. PSRC and WSDOT recently updated the PSRC model and those updates have been incorporated into the model for SR 167. Local land use information has also been added to make sure that key interchanges are being modeled using this more detailed, local information.

The project team is also working on the traffic operations or simulation model. This model is currently being built and calibrated for the PM peak hours for the

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entire corridor. Four key bottleneck areas along SR 167 will be examined with this model, including the SR 18 interchange, the section between SR 410 and SR 512, the area at 43rd /180th Street in Renton, and SR 516.

Discussion:

- The partners had many questions about the traffic data graphs and requested that Perteet send out a larger, easier to read version to the partners via email.
- Craig Stone, WSDOT, encouraged the project team to coordinate with the I-405 and HOT Lane consultants on the modeling efforts. There was a joint meeting to discuss travel demand forecasting and the teams need to do this now with the operational models. It may also be beneficial to talk to the SR 518 team.

Continued Partner Discussion

Meeting Attendees

Tim LaPorte asked that the partners have a higher-level discussion on the project time frames, vision for the corridor, how the election and new electeds affect next steps, and what the future milestones are. Carol Hunter said that the Corridor Plan will be complete in September 2006. The TPA funds will allow further environmental work to be done for all of the planned projects along SR 167, which will help move them closer to implementation. The Nickel funds cover the Stage 4 HOV EA work and provide additional dollars for bottleneck project documentation. The TPA funds construction work for the HOV/HOT Lanes and the additional lane off of I-405.

Discussion:

- Ann Martin expressed concern that the Corridor Plan, HOT Lanes, HOV extension and other projects along SR 167 are not being evaluated cumulatively. The projects, and their environmental review, are being divided up because of the funding sources that are coming through piece by piece. It is better practice to conduct an environmental assessment of the cumulative impacts of all projects along the corridor. When a project is funded, project specific issues can then be filled in. Ann said she hopes WSDOT considers conducting an environmental review on a larger scale for SR 167.
- Charlie Howard agreed that it is important to take a system level approach for environmental issues.
- Ann Martin also asked if the public would have an opportunity to review and comment on the cumulative impacts of projects along SR 167 and if so, how that process would fit into the individual project processes.
- Craig Stone noted that environmental reviews, as opposed to policy makers, should not be the method for planning and implementing a project or projects and should only be a piece of the process

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- Tim LaPorte noted that, with the new funding, the teams should consider refocusing their thinking for the corridor to ensure that work being done by consultants on the individual projects dovetails into the next steps, such as an environmental assessment of the entire SR 167 corridor.
- The partners noted that by next September, the Corridor Plan will serve as a master plan for the SR 167 corridor. It may be appropriate at that point to go into an environmental assessment process for the corridor in order to assess cumulative impacts as Ann suggested.
- WSDOT agreed to have staff discussions about what the partners brought up during this discussion, regarding a more comprehensive environmental review.
- Tim LaPorte asked for an update on executive coordination. Craig Stone said that the department anticipates the first Executive Advisory Committee meeting after the holiday season. Before that, staff must make some decisions on how the secretary and the governor will be involved in the SR 167 projects, and WSDOT projects in general.

Next Meeting: 1/17/06, 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.

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